

Dam, and I hope we can again rekindle the spirit and invest in America.

RECOGNIZING LORELEI SHEPARD

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I rise today to recognize and thank Ms. Lorelei Shepard, who will be retiring from the United States Senate at the end of the year. Lorelei began her career on the Hill in 1993, working for the Secretary of the Senate as an elevator operator in the Capitol. She eventually became a supervisor where she was responsible for managing the weekly schedule of 20 operators and supervising their day to day duties. Her pleasant demeanor and calm nature served her well as she guided and delivered confused visitors and harried staff and Senators to their destinations in the Capitol.

She joined the staff of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in 1995, as the Committee's receptionist, where once again her calm and friendly approach and knowledge of the Capitol served her well. In 2000, Lorelei decided to pursue one of her dreams and she moved to a beautiful home in a little town in Vermont. As a Californian, I think it is safe to say that although beautiful, the winters in Vermont leave something to be desired. Thanks to that New England winter, Lorelei decided she needed to thaw out and she soon returned to Washington. Through a combination of good luck and timing, the Committee was able to have Lorelei join the Committee staff again, at the end of 2001.

She has served for the last 10 years on the Committee's staff, including for the last 5 years as our security assistant, making sure that classified documents are logged and distributed appropriately, handling classified correspondence, and keeping track of the secrets entrusted to the Committee.

It is the Intelligence Committee's constitutional responsibility to oversee the intelligence activities of our nation. Through her many years of service on the Committee, Lorelei has made a quiet but critical contribution to this effort. For that, I thank her.

Though Lorelei will be leaving, the Shepard family still remains a part of the Senate community. Lorelei's daughter, Lori, and son, Peter, have followed in their mother's footsteps and both work in the Senate today. This is quite a testament to their family's commitment and dedication to our nation and one for which they should be proud.

I wish Lorelei all the best as she retires and eventually returns to Vermont. I know she will enjoy the new-found time she will have to pursue her love of quilting, writing and the myriad of other talents with which she has been blessed.

On behalf of the Intelligence Committee, many thanks Lorelei, best wishes, and stay warm.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I rise to speak in support of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2011, which I am pleased to cosponsor today. As attorney general of Rhode Island, I saw firsthand the good work the Violence Against Women Act, VAWA, has done to protect victims of domestic violence, to provide crucial services to those in need, and to hold batterers accountable. The VAWA Reauthorization Act builds on that record of success and makes important updates to strengthen the law, while cognizant of the challenging budget circumstances we face. I congratulate Senators LEAHY and CRAPO for their hard work and leadership on this bill.

I am particularly appreciative that Senators LEAHY and CRAPO have included the Saving Money and Reducing Tragedies through Prevention Act of 2011, or the SMART Prevention Act, which I previously introduced, within the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

Far too many teens suffer abuse at the hands of a dating partner. According to the Centers for Disease Control, for example, 1 in 10 teenagers reported being hit or physically hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend at least once in the past year. The SMART Prevention Act will support innovative and effective programs to protect our children from this dangerous abuse.

Earlier this year, as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism, I held a field hearing in my home State on "Preventing Teen Violence: Strategies for Protecting Teens from Dating Violence and Bullying." With hundreds of students from Tolman High School in Pawtucket, RI, in the audience, prominent advocates and experts testified about the importance of educational and community programs in preventing dating violence among teenagers.

The witnesses explained that teen dating violence remains a serious problem, but that we can take important preventive measures. Ann Burke, a leading national advocate, explained that school-based teen dating violence prevention programs, especially those focused on middle schools, have proven effective in changing behaviors. The Lindsay Ann Burke Act, named in memory of Ann's daughter, a victim of dating violence, supports abuse education programs for teens in Rhode Island. Since its passage, physical teen dating violence rates in our State have decreased from 14 percent in 2007 to 10 percent in 2009.

These preventive measures are most effective when part of a community-wide approach. As Kate Reilly, the executive director of the Start Strong Rhode Island Project, explained at the hearing, effective prevention programming should not be limited to schools alone, but should "meet kids where

they live and play." That requires involving parents, coaches, mentors, and teen and community leaders, as well as using new technology and social media in innovative ways.

One group of children needs particular attention: children who have witnessed abuse in their home. Deborah DeBare, the executive director of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, explained at the hearing that "growing up in a violent home may . . . lead to higher risks of repeating the cycle of abuse as teens and young adults." By supporting robust services for children exposed to domestic violence in the home, we can help break the intergenerational cycle of violence.

The SMART Prevention Act builds on each of these insights. It would create a new grant program within VAWA to support dating violence education programs targeting young people, with a particular focus on middle school students. The bill would also support programs to train those with influence on youth, including parents, teachers, coaches, older teens, and mentors. The new teen dating violence prevention program would be coordinated with existing grant programs focused on prevention, including a program directed at children who have witnessed violence and abuse. By requiring coordination with these programs, and focusing resources on prevention, the SMART Prevention Act is also smart policy fiscally. Abuse that is prevented reduces the strain on our already overburdened health and education systems.

New laws in several States, as well as innovative and hard-working organizations such as the Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund and the Katie Brown Educational Program in New England, have demonstrated how effective such prevention programs can be, so now is the time for Congress to act.

I again thank Senators LEAHY and CRAPO for their leadership in reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act. I look forward to working with them and other Senators from both sides of the aisle toward a country that is free from dating and domestic violence.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise today to mark International Human Rights Day, a day which celebrates the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948.

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, and reacting with revulsion to the horrors of that global war and the Holocaust, the community of nations organized itself with the goal of protecting international peace and security. Although the United Nations founding Charter recognized the protection of human rights as one of the

UN's most basic purposes, it was quickly recognized that it would be necessary to further elaborate these fundamental freedoms in order to ensure their protection. The resulting document—the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—has since served as the foundation upon which all other human rights work at the international level has stood. It remains to this day an enduring guide for human rights advocates around the globe.

This has been an exciting and dramatic year that will be remembered for the triumphs of the Arab Spring. The fall of so many dictators who have been responsible for the deaths, torture, and other atrocities meted out against so many has opened up the exhilarating prospect of real reform and meaningful human rights improvements. But the final chapter of the Arab Spring has not yet been written, and nothing can be taken for granted.

Progress in this field is not necessarily linear. As Ronald Reagan said in his inaugural address, "Freedom is a fragile thing and is never more than one generation away from extinction."

I believe it is especially critical, at this historic moment, for the United States to remain vigilant in the protection and promotion of human rights—abroad and at home.

Overseas, the United States must continue to use our voice to speak on behalf of those silenced by brutal regimes. We must continue to lift up those who cannot stand on their own. And while we must inevitably pursue a multifaceted foreign-policy that advances American goals in a broad range of areas including hard security and the economy, we must never treat human rights as something expendable.

I take particular note of the countries that stand shoulder to shoulder with us in that effort. I welcome Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski's call for a "European endowment for democracy," similar to the National Endowment for Democracy which the United States has supported since 1983. I commend Poland for the leadership it has shown on human rights issues during its presidency of the European Union.

In all of these efforts, the role of civil society remains critical. On the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations adopted a declaration on the rights of human rights defenders. They are the first line of defense and they often pay the highest price.

There are, unfortunately, too many cases of human rights defenders who are imprisoned, persecuted or worse, for me to raise them all here. But I would like to mention one in particular that maybe emblematic of many others: the case of Evgenii Zhovtis, Kazakhstan's most well-known human rights activist.

Zhovtis is the Director of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law and even a member of the OSCE Office for

Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' panel of experts on freedom of assembly. But he was involved in a tragic car accident in which a pedestrian was killed and, after a trial widely condemned for lacking due process, he was sentenced in 2009 to 4 years in prison.

A year ago, at the OSCE Summit in Astana, civil society activists called for Zhovtis' release. As one NGO participant remarked:

Evgenii is the human rights Everyman. If this can happen to him, it can happen to anyone.

A year later, Evgenii Zhovtis remains in a Siberian penal colony, even as Kazakhstan prepares to host an OSCE election observation mission. In the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I once again urge President Nazarbayev to review his case and to release him.

Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO JOAN MCKINNEY

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to Joan McKinney, who has been a beloved and respected mainstay of the Senate Press Gallery for almost 40 years.

Joan retired recently after a decade of service on the Press Gallery staff. Prior to that, she served the people of my home State of Louisiana for 2½ decades as Washington correspondent for the Baton Rouge Advocate.

Joan is originally from Greenville, SC, and is a graduate of Winthrop College. She came to Washington in 1971 to work on the press staff of our dear colleague Senator Fritz Hollings.

As her career advanced, she chose to return to journalism, working first as a reporter for the Greenville News, where her father served as editor, and then for another paper from my home state, the Shreveport Journal.

Joan was hired away by the Advocate when she continually beat the Advocate's reporter—who happened to be the son of the publisher—on stories. I came to know and respect Joan during our many hallway meetings that so often occur between Members and the press. I also had the great fortune of getting to know her as a person and as a friend.

In her tenure as the Advocate's congressional correspondent, Joan came to be well respected by members of the Louisiana delegation from both parties. The Members from my State knew her as fair-handed and tough, and most of all, that there was nothing, nothing that could get by her.

Through her work, Joan became an expert on the intricacies of the Senate and the Supreme Court. She took this knowledge with her into her role as a member of the Senate daily press gallery staff. I know her Senate acumen on the institution and its procedure was of great value to the reporters roaming the gallery who relied on her for deep insight about the Chamber they cover.

Joan, who has won reporting awards from the South Carolina and Louisiana press associations, is a longtime member of the elite Gridiron Club of newspaper writers. She was one of the first women to become a member.

I know that one of Joan's biggest interests is dance, something I am told she plans to be very active with in retirement. Long before "American Idol" and "So You Think You Can Dance," Joan was an excellent competitive dancer. Her specialty is Shag, a regional dance popular in the Carolinas.

This year, Joan won her first national Shag championship. With more time to practice, I am sure more dance titles are on the way.

For those of us who have been fortunate to work with Joan, it is almost impossible to imagine the Press Gallery without her. But I know I join the entire Senate press corps in wishing Joan the best as she embarks on this new adventure in her life.

Joan, thank you for sharing with this institution and our entire country your knowledge, experience and good heart. All of us are better as a result of your service to the best ideals of our democracy.

CROWDFUNDING

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to address a promising new idea for investors and small businesses: crowdfunding.

In recent years, small businesses and startup companies have struggled to raise capital. The traditional methods of raising capital have become increasingly out of reach for many startups and small businesses. There is another option, but Congress must act to authorize it and provide for appropriate safeguards.

Low-dollar investments from ordinary Americans may help fill the void, providing a new avenue of funding to the small businesses that are the engine of job creation. The CROWDFUND Act would provide startup companies and other small businesses with a new way to raise capital from ordinary investors in a more transparent and regulated marketplace.

The promise of crowdfunding is that investments in small amounts, made through transparent online forums, can allow the "wisdom of the crowd" to provide funding for small, innovative companies. It allows ordinary Americans to get in on the ground floor of the next big idea. It is American entrepreneurship at its best, which is why it has the support of the President and many in the business community.

That said, there are real risks of investment losses at a rate far beyond ordinary investing. Crowdfunding, if done without proper oversight, provides significant opportunity for fraud. Indeed, it was not too long ago that our financial regulators were doing daily battle with scam artists pitching huge returns on fraudulent schemes through small, unregistered securities.